Compound and Conjunct Verbs in Tamil

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Verbs in Tamil are of three types: simple verbs, compound verbs, and conjunct verbs. Simple verbs contain only one verbal root. Compound verbes are formed by a combination of a sequence of verbs. Conjunct verbs are formed by a combination of a sequence of noun plus verb.

Compound Verbs :

The first element of a compound verb is a main verb in non-finite form. The main verb contains the primary meaning. The non-finite forms of the main will be compounded with auxiliary verbs to denote various modes, tenses, and aspects. The non-finite forms involved in compounding are infinitive, past-participle, and gerundive.

Compounding with infinitive :

The infinitive form of a verb ends in **-a**. The following are the possible combinations of infinitive as a main verb with various auxiliaries.

Potential$_1$: $V_{inf.}$ + muṭi + um
E.g. avaḷaal paṭikkamuṭiyum 'She can read'
Potential$_2$: $V_{inf.}$ + var + um
E.g. avaḷukku paaṭavarum 'She can sing'

Negative potential$_1$: $V_{inf.}$ + muṭi + aatu

E.g. avaḷaal paarkkamuṭiyaatu 'She cannot see'

Negative potential$_2$: $V_{inf.}$ + var + aatu

E.g. avaḷukku peesavaraatu 'She cannot speak'

Probabilitative$_1$: $V_{inf.}$ + kuuṭ + um

E.g. avaḷ viiṭṭukku varakkuuṭum 'She may come home'

Prohibitive$_1$: $V_{inf.}$ + kuuṭ + aatu

E.g. nii viiṭṭukku varakkuuṭaatu 'You should not come home'

Obligative : $V_{inf.}$ + veeṇṭ + um

E g. nii viiṭṭukku varaveeṇṭum 'You should come home'

Prohibitive$_2$: $V_{inf.}$ + veeṇṭ + aam

E.g. nii viiṭṭukku varaveeṇṭaam 'You should not come home'

Inceptive$_1$: $V_{inf.}$ + poo + T + PNG

E g. malai varappookiRatu 'It is going to rain'

Inceptive$_2$: $V_{inf.}$ + var + T + PNG

E g. avaṉukku mooḷavarukiRatu 'He is feeling to urinate'

Inceptive$_3$: $V_{inf.}$ + paar + T + PNG

E.g. avaṉ avaḷai kollappaarttaaṉ 'He was about to kill her'

Causative$_1$: $V_{inf.}$ + cey/vai/aṭi + T + PNG

E g. avaṉ avaḷai kuṭikkacceytaaṉ 'He caused her to drink'

avaṉ avaḷai paaṭavaittaaṉ 'He caused her to sing'

avaṉ avaḷai caakaṭittaaṉ 'He caused her to die'

Causative$_2$: $V_{inf.}$ + viṭu, pooṭu + T + PNG

E g. avaṉ avaḷai uḷḷee varaviṭṭaaṉ 'He allowed her to come in'

avaṉ vittai veyilil kaayappooṭṭaaṉ 'He put the seeds in the sunshine to become dry'

The verb *aḻai* 'call', when in follows the infinitive form the main verb *varu* 'come', denotes causation.

E.g. avaṉ avaḷai varavaḷaittaaṉ 'He called (caused) her to come'

Passive : $V_{inf.}$ + paṭu + T + PNG

E.g. avaŋ koḷḷappaṭṭaaŋ 'He was killed'

Negative past : $V_{inf.}$ + illai

E.g. avaŋ pookavillai 'He did not go'

Negative future : $V_{inf.}$ + maaṭ + PNG (except third person neuter)

E.g. avaŋ pookamaaṭṭaaŋ 'He will not go'

Compounding with past participle :

The past participle form of a verb ends in *-u* or *-mal*. The following are the possible combinations of it with different auxiliaries:

Definitive$_1$: V_{pp} + poo/viṭu/pooṭu + Pas. T + PNG

E.g. avaŋ ceṭṭuppoonaaŋ 'He died (definitively)'

avaŋ avaḷai koŋRuviṭṭaaŋ 'He killed her (definitively)'

avaŋ avaḷai koŋRupooṭṭaaŋ 'He killed her (definitively)'

With verbs like *uṭai* 'break', etc., both *poo* and *viṭu* come as a sequence to denote more emphasis to the definitiveners in the completion of the action denoted by the mainverb.

E.g. atu uṭaintu pooy viṭṭatu 'That has broken'

Certainty$_1$: V_{pp} + poo/viṭu/pooṭu + Fu. T + PNG

E.g. avaŋ ceṭṭuppoovaaŋ 'He will die (certainly)'

avaŋ avaḷai koŋRuviṭuvaaŋ 'He will kill her (certainly)'

avaŋ avaḷai koŋRupooṭuvaaŋ 'He will kill her (certainly)'

Definitive$_2$: V_{pp} + aa + Pas. T + Neuter

E.g. avaŋ viiṭṭukku pooyaaccu 'He has gone home (definitively)'

Certainty$_2$: V_{pp} + tiir + Fu_T + PNG

E.g. avaŋ viiṭṭukku vantutiirvaaŋ 'He will certainly come home'

Completive : V_{pp} + tiir + Pas. T + PNG

E.g. avaŋ anta veelaiyai ceytutiirttaaŋ 'He has completed the work'

Trial : V_{pp} + paar + T + PNG

E.g. avaṉ paṭam varaintu paarttaaṉ 'He tried to draw pictures'

Habitual continuative$_1$: V_{pp} + vaa + T + PNG

E.g. avaṉ tiṉamum kaṭavuḷai tolutuvantaaṉ 'He was worshiping God daily'

Reflexive-benefactive : V_{pp} + koḷ + T + PNG

E.g. avaṉ avaḷai maṇantukoṇṭaaṉ 'He married her'
avaṉ taṉṉaittaaṉee aṭittukkoṇṭaaṉ 'He beat himself'

Non-reflexive-benefactive : V_{pp} + koṭu + T + PNG

E.g. avaṉ avaḷai avaṉukku kaṭṭikkoṭuttaaṉ 'He got her married to him'

Past perfective$_1$: V_{pp} + iru + Pas. T + PNG

E.g. avaṉ viiṭṭukku vantiruntaaṉ 'He had come home'

Present perfective : V_{pp} + iru + Pres. T + PNG

E. g.-avaṉ viiṭṭukku vantirukkiRaaṉ 'He has come home'

Expectative . V_{pp} + iru + Fu. T + PNG

E g. avaṉ ankee vantiruppaaṉ 'He might have come there'

Negative expectative : V_{pp} + iru + Inf. + maaṭ + PNG

E.g. avaṉ ankee vantirukkamaaṭṭaaṉ 'He might have not come there'

Durative : V_{pp} + koḷ + PP + iru + T + PNG

E.g. avaṉ vantukoṇṭiruntaaṉ 'He was coming'

Actually *iru* denotes the durative nature of the existing or resultant state of an action.

E.g. atu uṭaintirukkiRatu 'It is being broken'
avaṉ pasittirukkiRaaṉ 'He is feeling hungry'

Negative durative : $V_{neg.\ pp}$ + iru + T + PNG

E.g. avaṉ varaamaliruntaaṉ 'He was not coming'
atu uṭaiyaamalirukkiRatu 'It is not broken'

Neutralization : $V_{neg.\ pp}$ + illai

E.g. avaṉ uRankaamalillai 'He is not without any sleep (i. e. He slept)'

Past probabilitative$_1$: V_{pp} + iru + Inf. + veeṇṭ + um

E.g. avaṉ iRantirukkaveeṇṭum 'He might have died'

Counterfactive$_1$: V_{pp} + iru + Inf. + veeṇṭ + um

E.g. avaṉ iRantirukkaveeṇṭum 'He should have died (but he did not die)'

Compounding with gerundive :

The -al suffixed verbal noun is taken as gerundive here. The following are the possible combinations of it with auxiliaries.

Permissive : V_{ger} + aam (short form of aakum)

E.g. nii uḷḷee varalaam 'You can come in'

Probabilitative$_2$: V_{ger} + aam

E.g. malai peyyalaam 'It may rain'

Past probabilitative$_2$: V + iru + Ger. + aam

E.g. avaṉ iRantirukkalaam 'He might have died'

Counterfactive$_2$: V + iru + Ger. + aam

E.g. avaṉ iRantirukkalaam 'He could have died (but he did not die)'

Compounding with verbal noun :

The tense and neuter suffixed finite verbal form which can be considered as a nominal form is taken as verbal noun here.

Past perfective$_2$: V + Pas. T + Neu + uṇṭu

E.g. avaṉ viiṭṭukku vantatuṇṭu 'He had come home'

Negative past perfective : V + Pas. T + Neu + illai

E.g. avaṉ ankee vantatilllai 'He had not come there'

Habitual continuative$_2$: V + Pre./Fu. T + Neu + uṇṭu

E.g. avaṉ tiṉamum ankee varuvatuṇṭu 'He is coming there daily'

Negative habitual continuative$_2$: V + Pre./Fu. T + Neu + illai

E.g. avaṉ tiṉamum kuḷippatillai 'He is not taking bath daily'

All these compounding discussed above are meant for denoting different tenses, modes, and aspects. The com-

pound verbs of this type can be called simple action compound verbs. But there are compound verbs which denote complex actions. For example, the verb *koɳɟuvaa* 'bring' implies two actions, the action of possessing and the action of coming. Similarly *kaɳɟupiɟi* 'invent or find out' and *kaaRittuppu* 'spit' also contain two actions.

Conjunct Verbs:

A close-knit sequence of noun plus verb is known by the term conjunct verb. The primary meaning lies in the noun and the secondary meaning lies in the verb which follows. The nominal element cannot be followed by any post positions or case markers.

E.g. N + cey: yaattirai cey 'travel', visaaraɳai cey 'enquire'
N + paṭu: koopappaṭu 'feel angry', payappaṭu 'afraid'

This listing can be continued for pages together and that shows the number of possible combinations.

The difference between the noun plus verb combination which leads to the formation of conjunct verb and the other object-noun plus verb combination can be seen clearly where the same noun is used for both conjunct verb formation and object-noun and verb combination. The following are the examples.

1. The conjunct verb *veelai cey* means 'hold a job' whereas, *veelaiyai cey* simply means 'do work'
2. *kai piɟi* idiomatically means 'marry', whereas, *kaiyai piɟi* simply means 'catch hand'

It will be interesting to see which type of verb will compound with which type of verb or noun to form compound or conjunct verb. One can make certain rules to denote restrictions involved in these combinations.